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THE

Hindu Message

A Weekly Review of Indian and World-Problems from the Hindu Standpoint.

Medical Supplement

'चिकित्सितात्पुण्यतमं न किञ्चिदपि शुश्रुमः'। 'बिभेत्यल्पश्रुताद्वेदो मामयं प्रहरिष्यति'

VOL. I. No 23.] Registered No. M. 1304. THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 1922 [PRICE: 1 ANNA Annual Subscription Rs. 3.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

The Government of Madras have appointed a committee with Khan Bahadur Hakeem Mohamed Usman Sahib Bahadur B.A., M.L.C., F M.U. as Chairman and Capt. G. Srinivasa Murti B.A., B.L., M.B. and C M., as Secretary to report on the question of the recognition and encouragement of the Indigenous Systems of Medicine in vogue in this Presidency. The Committee has issued a set of questionaire, which we understand is being sent to various individuals and associations, both within and outside this Presidency with a view to gather all the available information in respect of the Indian Systems of Medicine. The Committee proposes not only to collect information but also to examine witnesses on the important issues involved.

We further understand that a sub-committee, consisting of the Chairmnn, Secretary and one of the members, has been travelling throughout India to acquire a first hand knowledge of the working of the different indigenous institutions.

We hope that the Committee will succeed in formulating and recommending practical schemes to the government.

Comparative cheapness of medicines, effective cures and minimum cost of establishment ought to be the main considerations of the government and for these, we would recommend the indigenous systems (*i.e.*, Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha) for general adoption.

There are at present some anomalies in these systems, we do not deny but they are not irremediable. We are therefore confident that if the patronage of the state is extended to these systems much can be accomplished to the mutual advantage of the state and the subjects.

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One of the greatest defects of the modern civilisation is an undue encroachment upon the simplicity and economy of the domestic life. The woman who is by nature entrusted with the management of the household has become physically degenerated, unfit to bear the burden of responsibility single-handed and devoid of all opportunities for training in the fine art of cooking. The situation may even be said to have reached its climax in view of the fact that the Government in their great anxiety to save the Indian women are organising maternity and child welfare associations. The establishment of special maternity Hospitals and nursing homes controlled by lady doctors and nurses imported from foreign countries is engaging their attention. There is no doubt a vast field open to individual effort and organisation to improve the lot of women by organising institutions of facilities for training in the art of cooking and domestic management, thereby paving a way for the economic uplift of this vast country. Too much cannot be expected of any Government.

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The death is announced of Sir Patric Manson, late physician and medical adviser to the Colonial Office and distinguished parasitologist.

Sir Patrick Manson, G.C.M.G., was the first to enunciate the hypothesis (since proved by Sir Ronald Ross) that the mosquito was the host of the malarial parasite at one stage of its existence and thus an active agent in diffusing the disease. It was largely due to his efforts while he was in Hongkong that the Colony undertook an elaborate system of drainage which greatly reduced the mortality from malaria. Sir Patrick Manson was 78 years old and before his retirement was Physician and Medical Adviser to the Colonial Office.

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Brockway would teach health habits and social hygiene in preference to anatomy and physiology in the schools. Such instruction is calculated to be of far more benefit to the school-child as a future citizen. While correction of defects in physique or health is a tremendous problem in itself, it only scratches the surface of what needs to be accomplished in preventive medicine. In the Toledo schools the system of revised health instruction is already beginning to show results.

Keeping Fit.

MENTAL EXERCISE.

The "Times" Medical Correspondent writes:—

There are probably far more persons who stand in need of mental exercise than of physical. This aspect of the science of keeping fit is one that is almost entirely neglected.

Because, while it is easy to persuade a man that his body requires activity for its proper functioning it is exceedingly difficult to inculcate a similar lesson in connection with his mind. No matter how unobservant we may be or how entrenched in our self-sufficiency, we cannot avoid noticing the signs of deterioration in our physical appearance. Age and unfitness cry aloud their doleful warnings.

It is a different matter with the brain. That organ is hidden. Its unfitness comes stealthily with noiseless steps so that we are quite unaware of its approach.

Yet everything which is true of body is true of mind. The unfitness of the supreme human power follows the identical laws which govern the unfitness or all the less activities. It can be held off only by the use of those means which delay the coming of physical deterioration.

In other words, a healthy mind is an exercised mind, an active mind, a mind obtaining its full share of generalised as opposed to particular effort. He who has no enthusiasm save for his work will soon have no ability for that work.

A WISE SAW,

There is an old saying, "Tired of London, tired of life." It expresses a great truth. For in this case London stands for the world and for our relations to it. To have but one point of contact with our environment is to confess ourselves mentally unfit.

But mental exercise must not be work. It is no more possible adequately to "stretch" the mind on a single often repeated task than it is to bring the whole body into play in a single movement. Mental exercise means relaxation of a great activity in favour of life itself. One must cease to be a worker and become, for a time, a human being.

A recent inquiry among City-men has revealed the surprising fact that only a small proportion of them make definite provision for what is often contemptuously called "amusement." Even those who are careful to take exercise sin greatly in this respect. They play "golf," but they do not play life. The theatre scearcely knows them ; books are not their friends. Even ordinary conviviality is left out of the day's account.

It may surprise these people to learn that they are, in all probability, definitely shortening their lives by his neglect. For the brain, not the body, is master. How many instances does not history afford us of enfeebled bodies held in blazing activity by minds which seemed to grasp the world in their range?

Our hold on life is never purely physical. A man, indeed, is as old as his arteries. And these can be only be nourished and invigorated by contact with reality.

When that has been said it may be allowed that the form of mental exercise chosen is capable of wide variation. Yet there is a strong case for the arts as against the sciences. The latter exercise the intellect; the former both intellect and emotion and will. It is perhaps because we recognise this instinctively that some of our greatest business minds are most alert to the advantages of artistic interests. They find in the processes of nature, of which art is the expression, the scope their minds require for their full development. It was not by accident that Shakspeare wrote:—

That man who has no music in his soul
Is fit for treasons, felonies, and crimes.

MENTAL ILL-HEALTH.

There are but extreme symptoms of mental ill-health. There are other symptoms less easy to detect, but quite as significant. The late Professor Waller invented a subtle instrument which was attuned so as to be able to detect electrical currents passing to and fro in the human skin. By the aid of this instrument he could measure the degree and the effect of emotions of various kinds.

These, he found, have a physical basis. That is to say, they exercise the very subtlest mechanisms of the body, its vastly complicated nervous system, and the myriads of tiny blood-vessels which are under nervous control. These are the "aluice-gates" of life itself, for the nourishment of every seperate organ depends on their tone and activity.

Thus happiness is much more than a feeling. It is a gust of health blowing within both mind and body. The assurance of the old Biblical writer that "a merry heart doeth good like a medicine is profoundly true in the most modern scientific sense.

It follows that our laughter-makers are among the great physicians of their time. "Their "fees" measured in the benefit they confer are small indeed. A merry play or a merry book has always been, and always will be, one of the avenues to fitness which no wise man will leave unexplored,

In these times especially we need laughter as we need light and food and air. Those who are starving themselves of the healing draught are robbing their work of its rightful energy. They are too, failing to improve their bodily health, and so proving themselves unworthy disciples of the gospel of fitness.

Mental Hygiene.

A NEW INSTITUTION.

At a largely attended and representative meeting of medical men and laymen interested in mental hygiene, held in mail week at the Royal Society of Medicine, I, Wimpole-street, the National Council for Mental Hygiene was inaugurated with Sir Courtauld Thomson as its first president.

Sir Courtauld Thomson who presided, said a most cordial sympathetic mesage of welcome had been received from the National Committee of Mental Hygiene of America and he trusted that as a result of these proceedings Great Britain would for the first time be able to take her place in the international conferences on mental hygiene, which it was hoped would take place in the near future. He had also seen that morning the Minister of Health who had assured him of his sympathy and support. The National Council would direct its

energies to the benefit of the whole country, but all the skill, devotion and energy of the medical profession would be of small avail if they had not the whole-hearted support of their fellow-countrymen.

They must see to it that their fellow-countrymen lived in conditions of mental hygiene which were not inferior to the standard of physical hygiene which prevailed throughout the country. It was for that reason that he appealed to laymen to join the movement. He made the appeal without apology or hesitation, because he thought it was an honour and a privilege that they should be allowed to co-operate with the medical profession in their great and patriotic endeavour to improve the health of the people and increase the efficiency of the nation and of the world at large.

Sir Humphry Rolleston President of the Royal College of Physicians, said one was always inclined to think that medicine had reached a pitch which it would be difficult to surpass. We could no doubt flatter ourselves that medicine had advanced very far. The aim and object of medicine at the present time was the prevention of disease and to that end study was now directed to the detection of very early symptoms, such as functional disorders which preceded any organic change in the body. It was with the detection of early functional disturbances that mental hygiene was closely occupied. It was often said that we were all more or less on the way to being mad. At all events we must not look on mental disorder as being something rare or, if it affected ourselves, feel any shame on that account.

Since 1908 there had been a Council of Mental Hygiene in America which had done a great deal of work; four years ago Canada started, and about a year and half ago a league was founded in France. There were thus three national leagues which were able to meet together and pool their knowledge. About five or six weeks ago Sir Courtauld Thomson addressed a letter to the "Times," in which he pointed out the importance of this National Council.

A Statement of Aims.

Its aims were extraordinarily wide. They were:—

(1) the encouragement, and the correlation and organisation of means of communication between the various societies and associations concerned with mental hygiene;

(2) to join with the other national councils to form an international league, for combined action and the interchange of knowledge;

(3) to study the causation and prevention of mental disturbances, which were extremely common in this and other countries and had been increasing since the beginning of the war; including the study of environment. heredity, and various poisons such as alcohol and lead,the dangerous trade, and the important subject of syphilis;

(4) to include the subject of mental hygiene permanently in medical education;

(5) to further the establishment in general hospitals of special clinics for the early treatment of mental disorders in such conditions as would remove the public prejudice against the word "mental" which implied that the person was not stable;

(6) to improve the conditions of the treatment of mental disorders, particularly in the early stages when a great deal of good could be done at home by the institution of social service; and

(7) judicious propaganda.

It was then unanimously agreed "That the National Council for Mental Hygiene be formed and on the motion of Sir Frederick Mott, seconded by Dr Farquhar Buzzard, Sir Courtauld Thomson was elected Chairman.

Lord Southborough proposed, Lady Darwin seconded and it was agreed, that the Provisional Committee, whose names were given in Sir Courtauld Thomson's letter in the "Times," with the addition of the name of Sir Humphry Rolleston, be authorised to act for six months, with power to add to their number to draw up a constitution and elect an executive committee.

Sir Courtauld Thomson then announced that Sir Charles Russell and Co., hon. solicitors to the British Red Cross had consented to act as hon. solicitors to the National Council and Sir Basil Mayhew, auditor to the British Red Cross, had consented to act as hon. auditor.

"Only Nerves."

Dr. Henry Head pleaded for the co-ordination of the results of highly specialised scientific work which had been accomplished in relation to the mental health of the nation. The word 'menta' had an ominous sound which called up at once the idea of insanity. But mental hygiene meant only the maintenance of that state of health in which human beings could respond normally to the calls made upon them by daily life. Mental hygiene was as important as sanitation. Mind and body were inextricably intermingled. Those who played golf knew how completely they might go off their game. When they did, they wondered whether they were sickening for some illness. When they returned home tired and vexed, they discovered the real cause in a forgotten letter thrust into a a pocket unopened because of its disagreeable contents. This repression had been responsible for a a day of misfortune. The evil effects of such repression was one of the most important therapeutic lessons learned in the war.

No structural dissase was free from its mental concomitants and every mental state had its bodily equivalent. People said in a relieved voice, "It is only, nerves" but so called nerves produced more individual and corporate misery than cancer. They were evidence thatsomething was wrong beneath the surface of our mental life. Had a knowledge of mental hygiene boen more prevalent, we should have been spared the crazy exhibition of sugesstion to which this country had been recently exposed. We were advised whom a drain was obstructed not to clear the ofiluent but to say "carpasse:" is the hope that there by the nexious ofluvia would be dissipated.

Sir Leslie Scott, M. P., paid a high tribute to the work of the Central Association, for Mental Welfare and the After Cars Association, and said it was of the greatest importance that the various bodies dealing with the subject of mental hygiene should be kept in touch with each other by some unifying body such as the proposed National

Council. Speaking from the point of view of the Courts of Justice of this country he thought it was of the highest public importance that persons who committed crimes because they were mentally "wrong" should be dealt with in the right way by medical attention, and that those who had to administer criminal justice should have the assistance of wise expert advise.

Major-General Sir John Goodwin, Director-General, Army Medical Service said he was a little sceptical as to whether the day of the fighting Services was entirely at an end. Modern war imposed a severe mental strain not only upon the fighting men but upon the whole community; and he felt that the subject of mental hygiene was of incalculable importance to the nation's future.

Sir Maurice Craig said it was poor economy to build vast institutions for the cure of the mentally afflicted. It would be very much better if more time, money, and thought were directed towards the prevention of mental disorders. Hitherto it had been the policy of this country with regard to a man who was breaking down, that until became insane nothing could be done for him.

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